

Mayor wants end to gay discrimination

United Press International

HOUSTON — Mayor Kathy Whitmire Monday urged approval of a referendum banning city job discrimination against homosexuals despite word officials in her Chamber of Commerce audience did not want it brought up.

The Chamber opposes the referendum to be held Saturday on a proposed city ordinance to prohibit discrimination in city hiring based on "sexual orientation." Whitmire voted for the ordinance when it was approved by City Council in June, but the citywide vote was forced by a petition with 60,000 signatures.

Paul Mabry, the mayor's press secretary, said he received a phone call Wednesday from the Chamber's director of intergovernmental relations who said the mayor's annual "State of the City" address could be canceled if there was an indication she would talk about the issue.

"I thought it was so ludicrous that I didn't repeat it to the mayor until Friday," Mabry said.

Whitmire said in a news conference following the speech there was no consideration given to not mentioning the referendum.

"When there is an election pertaining to city business, I make it a practice of mentioning it whenever I talk to voters," Whitmire said. "I don't hesitate to defend my opinions."

The mayor said if the referendum was defeated, "it would allow discrimination to be the policy of the city."

Opposition to the referendum also includes a coalition of ministers, a group of doctors and the Ku Klux Klan. Whitmire, now in her second term, said she does not believe her support for the issue will harm her political future.

"I think this issue will be approved by the voters because the issue is one of basic fairness," she told reporters.

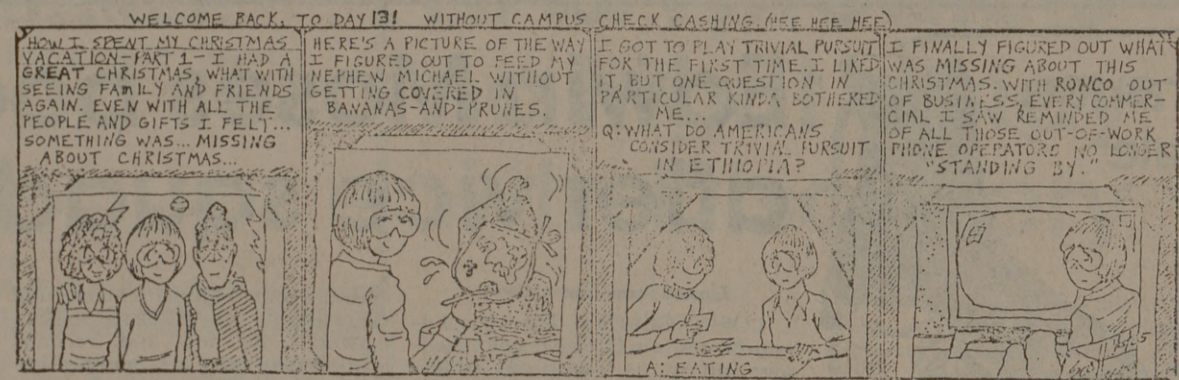
"We cannot risk our reputation as a city of opportunity," Whitmire told about 800 members of the Chamber of Commerce. "We cannot afford to be known as a city that condones discrimination."

Whitmire said economic development is the No. 1 priority for 1985. The Chamber's executive committee fears approval of the referendum would harm the business climate in the city.

The mayor said she is confident the rift with the Chamber will be forgotten after Saturday's vote.

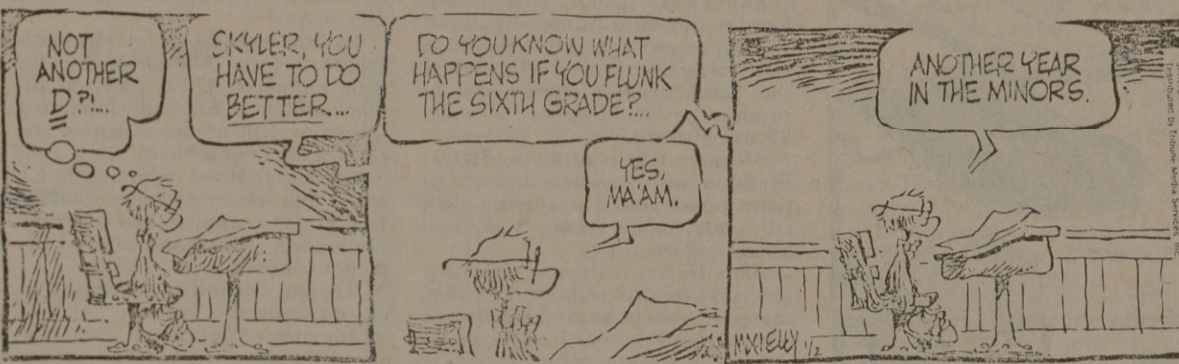
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Prison rodeo

TDC to continue annual event

United Press International

HUNTSVILLE — The Texas Department of Corrections Board rejected a proposal Monday to do away with the annual prison rodeo, despite a board member's claims the event is dangerous for the state, inmates and spectators.

The motion from Board Secretary Harry Whittington to discontinue the rodeo until it is officially established by an act of the Legislature died for lack of a second.

Whittington told board members they were obligated to protect the state from lawsuits that could arise not only from injured prisoners, but from spectators who also could be injured.

The TDC has held a yearly rodeo in Huntsville since 1931. The rodeo now is staged every Sunday in October at the Walls Unit of the TDC.

"The rodeo in 1931 was never authorized by the Legislature," he said. "It was entertainment for the prisoners and prison employees. Does the TDC have the right to use inmates for entertainment?"

The TDC spends about \$100,000 in compensation time to guards who work the Sunday rodeos. An average \$277,822 has been earned from the rodeo the past five years, but only \$70,000 was taken in last year because of bad weather. Attendance averages 75,402 a year.

Inmates with rodeo experience participate in traditional rodeo events such as steer wrestling, bareback bronc riding and bull riding. Prisoners with no experience are known as redshirts and take part in events such as wild cow milking and the Suicide Sunday, in which they try to grab a bag of money from between the horns of a wild bull.

Last year, 39 convicts were treated for injuries at the Walls infirmary, and four were hurt seriously enough to require hospitalization.

"I can't think of something that is so in violation of our duties to protect the public," he said. "Our obligation is to keep the state of Texas out of lawsuits. I think we could do the state of Texas a better service and the inmates a better service by find-

ing something else for them to do in October."

Several board members who declined to support Whittington's motion agreed he had raised legitimate issues that should be examined.

"I think there are issues — certainly the security aspect — that need to be looked into," said Board Chairman Robert Gunn. "Obviously the board disapproves of abandoning the rodeo, but we might take some of Harry's points and look into them."

Also at the board meeting, members of the Prisoners Rights Coalition requested the board take four steps to reduce prison violence. The organization asked that the board have a special hearing on violence within TDC, that they appoint a former inmate to the TDC board, that they meet with Gov. Mark White on the matter and with members of the House Law Enforcement Committee and Senate Criminal Justice Committee.

At least 395 inmates were injured in stabbings at TDC units last year.

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